



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS

M. JODI RELL
GOVERNOR

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Governor Rell: Connecticut Files Phase II Application for 'Race to the Top' Funding

Governor M. Jodi Rell today announced that Connecticut has delivered its application for the next round of federal "Race to the Top" education grants, seeking \$175 million in federal funding to make wide-ranging reforms in the state's public elementary and secondary public schools. The 1,200-page application has been developed by – and is strongly supported by – the Governor's office, legislators, state school district officials, teachers, businesses, parents and others.

"This bold, comprehensive education plan for the future is the product of weeks of effort by people in state government, the education community, business leaders, parents and others – all working toward a common goal," Governor Rell said. "It is meticulously detailed and filled with specifics on our plans for achieving the vision all of us share: developing the best-educated, best-prepared students in the world.

"Our proposals include systems to track and evaluate the performance and growth of students, teachers, schools and administrators at every level," the Governor said. "There are concrete measures of teacher performance and new opportunities for parents to take active, decision-making roles in the performance of their children's schools. The plans also call for partnership councils that bring parents, community leaders and businesses – the future employers of our students – together to work for the improvement of our schools and better performance by our students, especially in critical subjects such as science, math and technology.

"From the beginning, we made a conscious decision to have all of the parties at the table – and that approach is reflected in the tremendous support for this application," Governor Rell said. "More than a dozen major Connecticut corporations – including Electric Boat, Pfizer, The Hartford and Travelers – have signed on as partners in our application. We have the backing of 163 of Connecticut's school districts and 88 percent of the teachers' unions, including the unions from Bridgeport, Danbury, Meriden, New Haven, Norwalk, Stamford, Waterbury and other urban districts. We also have the strong backing of our Congressional delegation.

“The application rests on the firm foundation of Connecticut’s new school reform law, which I proudly signed last week,” the Governor noted. “That new law increases the number of credits required for high school graduation and requires students to pass exams in core subjects such as math, history, biology and English. It also empowers parents, school boards and the state to step in when schools are failing and permits students to get credit toward graduation for on-line course work.”

State Education Commissioner Mark K. McQuillan said Connecticut’s application is “able to compete with the best in the nation.”

“Our education reforms are both comprehensive and workable and they represent the collaboration of dozens of organizations and agencies that have come together to support major improvements to our education system,” the Commissioner said. “We have brought representatives from state government, higher education and industry to the table with superintendents, board of education members, teachers, principals, union and association leaders, parents, community groups and other stakeholders to craft a plan that invests in Connecticut’s future. We are definitely in the Race.”

Connecticut’s Congressional delegation sent a letter of support for the application, saying the new law “validates Connecticut’s firm commitment to the goals of the Race to the Top competition including raising standards, supporting ways to improve teacher quality and turning around our state’s lowest-performing schools.”

Key themes in the state’s Race to the Top application include:

- **Pace** – The state has accelerated the timeframes for fully implementing systems for collecting and using student and teacher data
- **Opportunities** – The state is fostering more opportunities to learn and grow in the school environment and be better prepared for their future, such as more Advanced Placement classes, more credits for graduation, opportunities for students to take college courses in high school
- **Partnerships and Engagement** – The formal creation of a direct connection between student development in the classroom and college and work force preparedness
- **Creativity** – The state has created levers of change that will serve as a vision for moving reform initiatives forward across the state
- **Data** – The state is aggressively moving ahead with completion of the Statewide Longitudinal Data System to better track individual student performance
- **Support for Districts** – The state will provide more resources and assistance to help districts implement reform initiatives